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We claim:

1. A system for using an article of commerce to access a remote computer, comprising:

(a) a machine-readable indicia associated with the article of commerce, said indicia encoding at least one of a plurality of identification numbers, said encoded identification number corresponding to the article in accordance with an extrinsic standard;

(b) input means for generating a query signal corresponding to said encoded identification number;

(c) a database containing a plurality of network addresses and said plurality of identification numbers, each of said identification numbers being associated with at least one of said plurality of network addresses; said database being responsive to said query signal for providing one of said network addresses which is associated with said encoded identification number;

(d) a local host adapted for network communication; and

(e) a first network containing a plurality of nodes, each having an assigned network address; said network being operatively coupled to said database for allowing communication between said local host and that one of said nodes whose assigned network address corresponds to the network address provided by said database.

2. The system of claim 1 where said machine-readable indicia is a bar code, and wherein said input means includes a bar code reader.

3. The system of claim 2 where said identification number is at least a portion of a Uniform Product Code.

4. The system of claim 1 wherein said indicia is both machine- and human-readable, and wherein said input means

includes a keyboard for manually entering said identification number.

5. The system of claim 1 wherein said local host is a single-user computer.

6. The system of claim 1 wherein said local host is a multi-user computer with a plurality of user terminals.

7. The system of claim 1 wherein said local host computer is a node on said network having a network address.

8. The system of claim 1 further comprising a second network, wherein said local host computer is connected to said second network, said second network including a service provider computer that is a node on said first network.

9. The system of claim 8 wherein said database is resident on said second network.

10. The system of claim 1 wherein said database is resident on said local host.

11. The system of claim 1 wherein said database is resident on one of said nodes that is remote from said local host.

12. An apparatus for using an article of commerce to generate the network address of a computer on a network, comprising:

(a) reader means for generating an output signal
5 corresponding to an article identification number which is used to identify the article of commerce in accordance with a standard;

(b) a database having a plurality of identification numbers including said article identification number, and a
10 plurality of network addresses, and associating each of said identification numbers with at least one of said network addresses; and

15 (c) control means responsive to said output signal and operatively coupled to said database for retrieving from said database at least one of those of said network addresses which correspond to said article identification number.

13. The apparatus of claim 12 wherein said identification numbers are Uniform Product Codes.

14. The apparatus of claim 12 wherein said network addresses are Uniform Resource Locators.

15. The apparatus of claim 12 further comprising a local host and a remote host, each adapted for network communication, wherein said reader means is resident on said local host, and said database is resident on said remote host.

5 16. A database comprising:
first computer memory containing a plurality of identification numbers borne by articles of commerce, said identification numbers used to identify articles of commerce;

second computer memory containing a plurality of network addresses corresponding to remote information resources relating to articles of commerce, said resources being accessible via a network; and

10 means for associating each of said plurality of identification numbers in said first memory with at least one of said network addresses in said second memory.

17. The database of claim 15 wherein said database is a relational database, and said first memory is a first field within said relational database, and second memory is a second field in said relational database.

18. The database of claim 15 wherein said first and second memories are random access memory.

19. The database of claim 15 wherein said first and second memories are secondary storage.

20. The database of claim 15 wherein said identification numbers are Uniform Product Codes.

21. The database of claim 15 wherein said network addresses are Uniform Resource Locators.

22. A method for generating the address of a node on a network, comprising the steps of:

(a) associating in computer memory at least a portion of an identification number with the node's network address;
5 said identification number having recognized significance as a number identifying an article of commerce.

(b) providing an article of commerce bearing an indicia on which said identification number is encoded;

10 (c) reading at least a portion of said identification number from said indicia; and

(d) retrieving from said computer memory the network address associated therein with said product identification number.

23. The method according to claim 22 wherein said identification number is a Uniform Product Code.

24. The method according to claim 22 where said network address is a Uniform Resource Locator.

25. The method according to claim 22 wherein said indicia is encoded in machine-readable format.

26. The method according to claim 22 where said indicia is encoded in human-readable format.

27. The method according to claim 22 wherein said step of reading is performed using a bar code reader.

28. The method according to claim 22 wherein said step of reading is performed by a human reading said indicia and entering said identification number using a keyboard.

29. The method according to claim 22 wherein said computer memory includes a database having one or more tables containing said identification number and said network address.

30. The method according to claim 29 wherein said tables are distributed over a plurality of computers.

10 31. The method according to claim 29 wherein said tables are resident on a single computer.

32. A method for disseminating network addresses using articles of commerce, comprising the steps of:

15 (a) generating a number corresponding to a network address;

(b) encoding the addresses on a machine readable indicia; and

(b) placing said indicia on the exterior surface of an article of commerce.